

Odashkooz

Bi-azhegiwemagak
mashkikiin



Odashkooz—Return Of The Medicines
Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, 2017
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House of Rows

Omeshkooz

Bi-azhegiwemagak mashkikiin

Elk—Return of the Medicines

The omashkooz (elk) has always had a special place in the hearts of Anishinaabeg. Belonging to the hooved clan, omashkooz are known for their kindness, gentleness, and soft-spoken nature. In many communities across Indian Country, omashkoozoog* embodies great medicine and fortitude.

Many years ago, omashkoozoog roamed much of North America in great numbers. In the mid 1800's populations began to plummet as settlement and overhunting began to rattle the landscape. In the Midwest, the landscape was no longer suitable for omashkooz to thrive, and the population continued to decline.

The 1800's and early 1900's were very interesting times for both omashkooz and Anishinaabe. At a time when omashkoozoog struggled to maintain adequate habitat, Great Lakes Anishinaabe were struggling with the effects of westward expansion and forced assimilation. In essence, while the omashkooz were being forced to extirpation, the Anishinaabe language and lifeway were also forcibly being sent down the same path.

Today, through strength and resiliency, both are making incredible strides to connect with the past. In a unique partnership between the Tribes, States, USDA Forest Service, and conservation organizations, omashkooz are making a comeback. All parties are working diligently to help omashkoozoog populations thrive again through reintroduction throughout the Ceded Territories.

In her rendition of omashkooz, renowned Fond du Lac artist Sarah Agaton Howes not only envisioned omashkooz, but many of the plants and medicines that have returned and helped to sustain their healthy survival. Much like omashkoozoog returning to their favorite plant foods, humans should also be following the food sovereignty movement backwards to a time of healthy and unprocessed foods. Howes delicately parallels omashkooz to the resurgence of Anishinaabe lifeway through language and cultural revitalization efforts. Wiigwaas (birch bark) is seen in the background, gently reminding viewers of the preservation of oral tradition. Wiigwaas embodies the concept of old teachings and the interconnectivity that exists between the natural world and Anishinaabe way of life.

18 x 24" posters are available from the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission at PO Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861, by phone (715) 685-2108 or email lynn@glifwc.org.

***Omashkoozoog is the plural for elk.**

